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SIPDIS

BBG/NI STEWART

STATE FOR AF/PD AMIRTHANAYAGAM
LAGOS FOR PAS

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SUBJECT: VOA SPORTS REPORTING WORKSHOP ON TARGET

Ref: State 242411

SUMMARY: U.S. media trainer, Ken Fischer, conducted a highly effective two-day "Sports Reporting" workshop in Abuja September 8-9. His program made a great impact on Nigerian journalists, who learned that accountability, transparency and professional journalism can contribute to Nigerian democracy. The Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON), an umbrella organization for all Nigerian broadcasters, said the workshop was immensely a big challenge to Nigerian journalists as Nigeria prepares to host the 8th All Africa games in October. Preparations for the coming event have been mired in scandals and scheduling problems, which the Nigerian media rarely report. Fischer made a strong point on the importance of reporters serving the interests of their audience as opposed to the prevailing focus on government personalities. End summary.

12. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: Public Affairs Abuja, in collaboration with the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON), organized a two-day "Sports Reporting" workshop in Abuja on September 8-9, 2003. U.S. media trainer Ken Fisher of the Department of Broadcasting, Southern Illinois University, conducted the workshop. He taught basic reporting skills, including journalism ethics, to a group of 30 Nigerian sports reporters and editors from 10 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory. He also provided them with highly needed primers on different sports (including baseball) that are unfamiliar to most Nigerians. BBG Sandra Stewart recruited Ken Fischer and coordinated the Washington preparations for the program, including certificates that were issued to the 30 participants at the end of the workshop.

13. JUSTIFICATION AND OBJECTIVE: Nigeria is a sports-loving nation, yet poor facilities, inadequate training, self censorship and heavy government control of the broadcast media hamper professional reporting. Nigerian preparations to host 23 different sports and athletes from throughout the Continent in the 8th All Africa games provided an excellent opportunity to help sports broadcasters prepare to meet the challenge of reporting a complex event spanning nearly three weeks. Normal Nigerian sports reporting basically focuses on results of football/soccer matches because of football popularity coupled with the reporters limited knowledge of other sports. Many journalists lack in-depth reporting and interviewing skills. They have no clear understanding of the role of the press in ensuring good sports administration. The workshop was requested by the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON) to help Nigerian sports reporters overcome these impediments by teaching them basic reporting skills and providing them with primers on different sports other than football/soccer.

14. MPP UMBRELLA THEME AND AUDIENCE REACHED: NI-PD-01 strengthening democracy. Audience was a targeted group of 30 sports reporters and editors drawn from mostly government-owned broadcast stations located in 10 northern Nigerian states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The program also impacted officials of the Organizing

Committee of the 8th All Africa games (COJA) and the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON).

15. USG SUPPORT: Excellent. Thanks to the superb work by Sandra Stewart in selecting Ken Fischer to conduct the workshop. With an excellent combination of practical exercises, PowerPoint lecture notes and video presentations, Fischer was able to capture and retain the complete attention of the participants for the two days, and in the process taught them how to plan good story ideas and how to bring a human touch to their reports. He gave the participants primers on different sports, including baseball, and exhorted the participants to make their reporting better and more professional.

16. RESULT/IMPACT: Excellent. "The lunch can wait," the participants chorused, as lunchtime was announced while they took turns practicing their newly acquired reporting skills while their colleagues critiqued them. This mood summed up the value that the 30 participants placed on the workshop. BON Chairman, Taiwo Allimi, profusely thanked the Voice of America and the U.S. Embassy in Nigeria for the opportunity to bring Nigerian sports journalists together at a learning table, or the first time in many years. Communications and media manager for the 8th All Africa games, Fan Ndubuo, said the workshop was on target, and he would like to build on the experience. The reporters described their two-day experience with Mr. Fischer teaching as down to earth and basic, and that they cannot wait to start applying their newly acquired skills in their next assignments.

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